

DATE: April 13, 2011

TO: Barbara Ross, Deputy Director  
Department of Planning and Zoning

FROM: Nathan Randall, Planner  
Department of Planning and Zoning

SUBJECT: Special Use Permit #2011-0012  
Administrative Review for Minor Amendment  
Site Use: Private School  
Applicant: Learning Foundations of Metropolitan Washington, Inc.  
Location: 1321 Leslie Avenue  
Zone: CSL/Commercial Service Low

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### **Request**

Special Use Permit #2011-0012 is a minor amendment request to increase the size of the existing Commonwealth Academy private academic school and to extend the official closing hour of the school from the current 5:00pm to 5:30pm. The 2,000 square-foot school expansion, from 19,000 to 21,000 square feet in total, will allow for additional space for elementary school-aged children. The later closing hour for the school is requested to offer high-school students additional time for a special study hall activity. The normal end to the school day will remain at 3:00pm for lower and middle-school students and 3:40pm for high school students.

No other changes to the operation are proposed, and although the applicant initially requested the removal of condition language requiring staggered drop-off/pick-up times and meetings with neighbors, this part of the original request was later withdrawn. The school will continue to operate with a maximum of 150 students and 40 staff.

### **Background**

Commonwealth Academy is a non-profit, private academic school that has operated at this site on Leslie Avenue for approximately ten years. City Council approved the first SUP for the site, SUP#2001-0093, in November 2001. An SUP amendment (SUP#2006-0015) was approved on May 20, 2006 for an increase in the amount of space at the school and an increase in the number of students from 100 to 150.

On April 11, 2011, staff visited the subject property and found no violations of the conditions of Special Use Permit #2006-0015. Staff has not received any complaints that would require staff to docket the Special Use Permit for public hearing.

### **Parking and Pick-Up/Drop-Off**

According to Section 8-200(A)(11) of the Zoning Ordinance, an elementary/middle school requires one parking space for every 25 students and a high school requires one

parking space for every 10 students. Commonwealth Academy, with up to 80 high school and 70 elementary/middle school students, must provide 11 off-street parking spaces. The school satisfies this parking requirement with 16 off-street parking spaces on-site. It also leases five additional, non-required parking spaces in the unpaved lot directly across Leslie Avenue from the school.

The applicant will continue to use the existing pick-up and drop-off zones on Leslie Avenue during staggered times as required by Condition #3.

**Community Outreach**

Public notice was provided through eNews, via the City's website, and by posting a placard on the site. In addition, the Del Ray Civic Association was sent an e-mail with information about the current application. Staff has received two comments from neighbors regarding this request. One neighbor raised general parking concerns and the other objected to the portions of the original request, since withdrawn, that would remove conditions about staggered arrival/departure times and meetings with neighbors. Staff has not received any comments from residents or adjacent businesses that would require staff to docket the Special Use Permit for public hearing.


**Staff Action**

Staff does not object to the minor amendment requests. The expansion of the lower school at Commonwealth Academy proposed here is small and will not result in an increase in the number of students or teachers at the school. The additional half-hour of operation in the evenings is reasonable and is intended to accommodate only a small number of high school students participating in an extended study hall activity. The proposed increases are less than two additional hours of operation and less than 20% of the existing floor area and are therefore consistent with Sections 11-511(2)(b)(i)(e) and 11-511(2)(b)(i)(a) of the Zoning Ordinance regarding minor amendments requests.

Staff hereby approves the Special Use Permit request.

**ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION - DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND ZONING:**

Date: April 14, 2011  
Action: Approved

  
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Barbara Ross, Deputy Director

- Attachments: 1) Special Use Permit Conditions  
2) City Department Comments  
3) Statement of Consent

**CONDITIONS OF SPECIAL USE PERMIT #2011-0012**

The applicant is responsible for ensuring that the following conditions are adhered to at all times. Violation of any of the conditions may result in fines and/or referral to public hearing by the Planning Commission and City Council.

1. The Special Use Permit shall be granted to the applicant only or to any business or entity in which the applicant has a controlling interest. (P&Z)(SUP2001-0093)
2. The maximum student enrollment shall not exceed 150 students. (P&Z) (SUP#2006-0015)
3. The applicant shall conform its operation generally to the elements of the Traffic Summary and Transportation Management Plan, dated September 28, 2001, filed as part of the application, which includes, without limitation (a) staggered arrival and departure times for students; (b) the use of a School Transportation Coordinator to assist with traffic management when students are arriving and leaving the premises; (c) no use of buses to transport students to and from school, except those small, public buses bringing students from public school as described in the application; and (d) coordinating and promoting carpooling among parents and students. (P&Z) (T&ES) (SUP#2006-0015)
4. **CONDITION AMENDED BY STAFF:** The applicant shall maintain the loading/unloading zone for buses and vehicles on Leslie Avenue adjacent to the main entrance to the building for arriving and departing students, ~~and shall work with the Department of Transportation and Environmental Services and Traffic and Parking Board to implement the change in parking.~~ (T&ES)(P&Z) (SUP#2006-0015)
5. **CONDITION DELETED BY STAFF:** ~~The applicant shall coordinate with the Department of Planning & Zoning and Transportation & Environmental Services on the means to notify users of alternate routes in conjunction with the realignment of the Monroe Avenue Bridge.~~ (T&ES)(P&Z) (SUP#2006-0015)
6. The applicant shall maintain the building and the site, including landscaping and façade treatment, generally consistent with the conceptual drawings provided as part of the application, to the satisfaction of the Director of Planning & Zoning.(P&Z) (SUP#2006-0015)
7. Condition deleted. (P&Z)
8. Condition deleted. (P&Z)
9. Condition deleted. (P&Z)
10. There shall be no outdoor storage on site. (P&Z)(SUP2001-0093)
11. The applicant shall provide site lighting in the parking lot to meet minimum city standards. Lighting shall be shielded to prevent excessive spillover and glare onto

- adjacent residential properties. (T&ES)(SUP2001-0093)
12. All loudspeakers shall be prohibited from the exterior of the building and no amplified sound shall be audible at the property line. (T&ES) (SUP#2006-0015)
  13. The applicant shall control odors, smoke, and any other air pollution from operations at the site and prevent them from leaving the property or becoming a nuisance to neighboring properties, as determined by the Department of Transportation & Environmental Service. (T&ES) (SUP#2006-0015)
  14. **CONDITION AMENDED BY STAFF:** The applicant shall consult the Crime Prevention Unit of the Alexandria Police Department regarding a security ~~survey assessment and alarms for the school of the additional school space once it is completed. The initial consultation is to be prior to the commencement of renovations to the building.~~ (Police)(SUP2001-0093)
  15. **CONDITION AMENDED BY STAFF:** The applicant shall ~~continue meeting~~ with affected neighbors on a periodic basis to discuss and seek solutions and mutual understanding as to neighborhood issues regarding the operation of the school. Required meetings may be suspended or resumed at any time by the Director of Planning & Zoning in consultation with immediate neighbors and nearby neighborhood associations. (P&Z) (SUP#2006-0015)
  16. **CONDITION AMENDED BY STAFF:** The applicant shall ~~install~~ maintain a fire suppression system for this facility. (Code)(SUP2001-0093)
  17. **CONDITION AMENDED BY STAFF:** The Director of Planning and Zoning shall review the Special Use Permit ~~after it has been operational for one year from the date of approval~~ and shall docket the matter for consideration by the Planning Commission and City Council if (a) there have been documented violations of the permit conditions which were not corrected immediately, constitute repeat violations or which create a direct and immediate adverse zoning impact on the surrounding community, (b) the director has received a request from any person to docket the permit for review as a result of a complaint that rises to the level of a violation of the permit conditions, or (c) the director has determined that there are problems with the operation of the use and that new or revised conditions are needed (P&Z) (SUP#2006-0015)
  18. The applicant shall conduct employee training sessions on an ongoing basis, including as part of any employee orientation, to discuss all SUP provisions and requirements. (P&Z) (SUP#2006-0015)
  19. **CONDITION AMENDED BY STAFF:** The applicant shall ~~install~~ maintain five ornamental or deciduous trees along the west side of the property. (P&Z)(RP&CA) (SUP#2006-0015)
  20. **CONDITION SUPERCEDED BY CONDITION #23 AND DELETED BY STAFF:** ~~The current proposal indicates that hazardous materials will be handled,~~

~~stored or generated on the property, Please discuss the type and nature of hazardous material being generated and provide the means and method of extraction and proper disposal of the waste. (T&ES) (SUP#2006-0015)~~

21. **CONDITION REQUIRED BY CODE AND DELETED BY STAFF:** ~~The applicant shall maintain and provide all on-site parking as required by the proposed intensification of the existing use. (T&ES) (SUP#2006-0015)~~
22. **CONDITION ADDED BY STAFF:** Supply deliveries, loading, and unloading activities shall not occur between the hours of 11:00pm and 7:00am. (T&ES)
23. **CONDITION ADDED BY STAFF:** All waste products including but not limited to organic compounds (solvents) used in the science laboratories shall be disposed of in accordance with all local, state and federal ordinances or regulations and not be discharged to the sanitary or storm sewers or be discharged onto the ground. (T&ES)